

Washington, DC – On Friday morning, Congressman Joe Sestak responded to President Obama's announcement that the United States, France, and the United Kingdom have evidence the Iranian government is hiding a nuclear facility about 100 miles south of Tehran. The revelation comes less than one week before the P5-plus-1 group -- which includes the United States, Britain, China, France, Russia and Germany -- is scheduled to meet with Iran in Geneva to discuss the country's nuclear program.

"This latest revelation is certainly a cause for alarm, and it demonstrates once again the need for the kind of intense diplomatic engagement President Obama has demonstrated at the U.N. and Group of 20 (G-20) Summit in Pittsburgh this week," the Congressman said from his office.

"While I am concerned about the announcement, it is worth noting that our intelligence community has already been aware of this development for an extended period. The President's decision to re-engage Iran after eight years of harsh rhetoric and no progress by the Bush Administration was made with full knowledge of the facility and we should not lose confidence in the President's new strategy at this time," the Congressman continued.

"The United States must ensure that Iran does not attain nuclear weapons, as this poses a direct threat to our interests, including Israel, and would in all likelihood provoke a regional arms race. As a former Admiral, it is my firm view that the best way forward is as follows:

The United States should continue to call upon Iran to open this new facility to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors and proceed with the planned October 1 summit with Iranian diplomats in Geneva. At that summit, the United States delegation must work with its counterparts from China, Britain, France, Germany and Russia to pressure Iran to halt any nuclear weapon programs it is pursuing.

If this effort fails, the United States must work with the U.N. Security Council to impose meaningful sanctions against Iran which will make it unpalatable for Iran to continue pursuing nuclear weapons.

The United States should also make it known to Iran that there are inducements for abandonment of nuclear weapon development, economically and in security, including the safe development of nuclear power for civilian use. The value of this "benefit" approach, balanced with the "costs" for Iran of not changing its direction, has basis in the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which assessed that "Tehran's decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political, economic, and military costs."

"President Obama has already demonstrated the possibilities of calculated diplomatic

engagement. Immediately after he announced his decision to cancel deployment of the “third site” in Poland and the Czech Republic last week in favor of a primarily sea-based European missile defense shield -- an approach that I have advocated for over a year --Russia announced that it was cancelling plans to deploy missiles in its Kaliningrad enclave,” said the Congressman.

“Then, on Wednesday, President Obama obtained a commitment from Russia -- for the first time ever -- to work with the United States to impose tough new sanctions against Iran if this Fall’s multilateral diplomatic efforts fail. On Thursday morning, President Obama oversaw U.N. Security Council passage (while acting as Chairman, for the first time in history) of his resolution aimed at strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and making it harder for countries -- including Iran -- to convert civilian nuclear programs into weapons programs,” the Congressman continued.

“These significant achievements were never attainable under the unilateralist approach favored by the Bush Administration. While all options must remain on the table, I am confident that this new Administration will continue its string of diplomatic non-proliferation successes by continuing tough, multilateral, and regional engagement with Iran.”

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*